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THE SOUTH AFRICAN QUESTION.

BY ANDREW CARNEGIE.

IN considering this question we must push aside as irrelevant the reason given for the recent demand upon the Transvaal. This, it will be remembered, was the wrongs of the foreigners there. The negotiation started with the presentation of a petition, ostensibly signed by these Uitlanders, imploring the Queen to consider their "wrongs" and to obtain redress. The British Government called the attention of its High Commissioner to this request and asked him to confer with the Transvaal Government. This resulted in a conference. The main demand made by the British Agent was for a shorter residence for these foreigners to render them eligible for the franchise. Britain wished five years' residence; the Transvaal proposed seven. The difference not being great, it was generally supposed that subsequent negotiations would result in a compromise and all would be well. Subsequently, five years was offered by President Krüger, under conditions which the British Agent at Pretoria, Mr. Greene, stated he thought his Government would accept, and which, Mr. Chamberlain admitted, conceded nine-tenths of British demands.

This franchise demand was very soon seen to be a flimsy foundation for Britain to rest action upon, because it placed her in the attitude of laboring for increased facilities for her own subjects to denationalize themselves and become subjects of the Transvaal. The public in Great Britain, however, did not see for a time that the Uitlanders' wrongs were merely an excuse for raising the real issue. The *London Times*, however, from near the very beginning, and continually as the negotiations proceeded, did not fail to state that this whole business of franchise for Uitlanders did not reach the problem, which was, in short, whether the British or the Dutch were to control South Africa.

When Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Morley and Sir Edward Clarke demonstrated that "the suzerainty" of Britain was abolished by the existing convention, the *Times* boldly replied that this was a matter not at all depending upon such subtle legal considerations, and stood, as before stated, upon the broad issue, Briton *versus* Boer. In this the *Times* was quite right; such is the issue and none other. Nor is it a new one. It was the issue in the last war between Britain and the Transvaal, in which the former was worsted, and there is no other issue in this war.

It is the fashion to-day to censure Mr. Gladstone's decision to end the last Transvaal war, and concede to the Boer, as the practical fruits of victory, the independence of the Republic. A party in Britain held then, as it holds now, that the war should have been continued, "Majuba Hill" avenged and British ascendancy then firmly established. Mr. Gladstone's critics to-day describe him as having acted under the influence of sentiment as opposed to practical politics and giving way to the *natural* dislike of a great empire to push matters to extremes against a few Boers. In this the writer thinks they do Mr. Gladstone grave injustice as a statesman. Much to this great man's credit, he was more open to the charge of magnanimous treatment of other nations than most British statesmen; but Mr. Gladstone had the advice of the ablest men conversant with the situation in South Africa, when he decided that force, in this case, was no remedy; that far-seeing statesmanship required that the Dutch element be conciliated, not destroyed, if it were ever to be amicably merged into the British. There have always been two parties advising different courses in regard to this serious question. There were two in Mr. Gladstone's time and there are two to-day—one urging peace, the other war.

The situation may be thus described: The Dutch settled in the Cape nearly 250 years ago, and were the dominant power. Britain subsequently took the Cape as a harbor on the route to India, and has remained in power. The Dutch race has settled there, is to-day increasing rapidly and has made South Africa its home. Sufficient time has elapsed for successive generations of the Dutch strain to be reared there, who now call themselves "Afrikanders" and have a strong league, the soul of which is the idea that Africa belongs to the Afrikanders—to those who were born there, whether British or Dutch.

Britain is too prosperous at home to furnish many emigrants in our day to any foreign lands. The few who do leave Britain usually prefer Canada or the United States, those who land in the former generally gravitating to the more genial south. In the Cape Colony, the principal of the four divisions of South Africa, the Dutch are largely in the majority, which is the case also in the Orange Free State. In Natal there are only a few thousand British. In the Transvaal there were scarcely any people but the Dutch, until the discovery of the mines, which have attracted foreigners from all nations, until to-day, by counting all foreigners as British, there may be a small majority against the Dutch; but these are not all British; some estimate that there are not more than six thousand Britons among the miners. Those of other nationalities do not side with the British as against the Dutch. The vast majority of these, as well as of the British, are opposed to the present attack upon the Transvaal. Of this there can be no doubt. These people are working in the mines, receiving enormous wages, and only wish to be let alone. They do not wish to become Burghers in order to vote; especially is this true of the British. I have peculiar means of knowing this. Several of the tenants upon my Skibo estates have sons or brothers in the mines, and I have from time to time been informed of the letters which they write home. There is one now in charge of an important mine whose letters are most significant. He stated to his father, in one of these, what I have already said, and that the Britons liked the Boers, and did not wish to become Burghers. They were there as Britons to make money, and finally to return to their own home. They wanted no franchise. He stated that the petition to Her Majesty praying her to interfere was not generally signed by the Britons, and that many of the foreigners signed the petition believing that it had reference to some dreaded temperance legislation in which they were deeply concerned.

I have also met Transvaal students who attend the Edinburgh medical schools. One of these was born in Britain, and his parents took him when young to Cape Colony. His father is a judge. Another, who was born in the Cape of English parents, is the son of a member of the Cape Assembly. These young men have since returned to their homes to fight for the coming "South African Republic," which they expect, and which shall be independent of all foreign powers, Britain included.

Now, the question which presented itself to Mr. Gladstone in the last war presented itself to-day to the present Government of Britain, and there were not wanting now, as there were not wanting then, some of the ablest and most experienced British officials who counselled the pursuance of the policy which Mr. Gladstone had adopted. They reason thus: "We, the British, are in a minority in South Africa, which is becoming greater and greater year by year, as the Dutch residents multiply, and we receive but few of our own countrymen as settlers, most of those who do come being only temporary residents, looking forward always to the arrival of the day when they have secured enough upon which to return to their own home. The home of the Dutch in the Cape is Africa. Our true policy now, the only policy open to us, which promises a chance of our becoming and remaining the paramount power, is one of co-operation and of friendliness with the more numerous and constantly increasing Dutch. We must trust to the superior qualities of our race, peaceably exercised, to its ability to rise to the top and to control affairs, and to the merging of the two races into the coming South African, the product of a union of Dutch and British."

The late Commander-in-Chief of the British forces at the Cape, General Butler, was, and is still, esteemed by many as a wise Governor, but he differed from the present Government as to the true policy, and he was called home. The British Agent at Pretoria, Mr. Greene, assured the Transvaal Government that he believed the proposal they made would be acceptable to his Government. It is no secret that Mr. Greene's policy was not that of Mr. Chamberlain, although while Mr. Greene remains in the diplomatic service there can be no expression of the difference of his views. Neither can General Butler enter into public controversy with his Government. These are servants of the Government and must be silent, although disgraced.

The policy now adopted is that of forcing the issue, raising a racial war and suppressing Dutch aspirations. This policy was attractive when it was believed that the mere decision to send a full army corps of thirty-five thousand men to supplement the British forces in South Africa would so appall the Dutch element that it would never raise a finger in the face of such tremendous forces against them, feeling that it would be madness to do so. This was the belief prevalent in England. It was reported that the

new General-in-Chief assured Her Majesty when he took his departure that the British flag would wave over Pretoria by Christmas.

Warnings were not wanting that the conflict might not be restricted to the Transvaal Republic if the race issue were the cry, and that the Orange Free State Republic, which is Dutch to the core, might join forces with her neighbor, that thousands of fighting men from the Cape Colony, also overwhelmingly Dutch, might flock to the Dutch standard, were the race question pressed home.

The war party took no heed of such dangers, and the able Britons who, knowing the situation, saw these possibilities were only rebuked for their baseless fears.

It was believed by most that it would be a mere parade to the Boer capital. Attention was everywhere called to the fact that no such stupendous force ever left the shores of England. This was not the opinion of the party who counselled the continuance of Mr. Gladstone's pacific policy. These, as it has since been proved, knew the situation. What they feared has come to pass. To-day a second army corps of thirty-five thousand men is already found necessary, and is soon to sail, Britain thus denuding herself of proper reserves and laying London open, as a French critic has recently said, to an attack by a few thousand men.

It is not to be a parade as expected; quite the reverse. This racial dispute promises to prove as severe a strain upon Britain as the Crimean war, and Lord Salisbury's successor may say of it, as he has recently said of that war, that it was "one in which Britain put its money upon the wrong horse." That the resources of Britain, if fully drawn upon, can ultimately overpower the Dutch temporarily need not be questioned, but whether the end attained can justify the sacrifice seems open to question.

It does not appear to the writer that it can possibly do so, because the suppression of the Dutch element to-day, if such be the result, will accomplish nothing permanent, if the situation is to remain as before described and the Dutch are to remain in South Africa as residents and increase rapidly, being a very prolific race, and the British are not to emigrate to South Africa in great numbers, and also settle there and increase. The result must inevitably be that the Dutch will be in a majority, growing constantly greater. Even more important than this is the fact that the people born

in Africa must more and more desire to rule themselves. It will be found very hard to drive out of the mind of an Afrikaner, whether of British or Dutch extraction, the idea that the country belongs to those who are born in it. The native-born must inevitably draw together and become one race, firm against any foreign race.

Should Britain endeavor to hold sway in South Africa through free institutions—such government, for instance, as Canada and Australia have—then the Parliament becomes Afrikaner, as that of Cape Colony now is, as the Parliament of Canada is Canadian and the Parliament of Australia Australian—with the difference that in Canada and Australia the people have no cause to be opposed to Britain and there is no racial question involved. People living in Canada and Australia have not been crushed by a foreign power of different race from beyond the sea, which assumes to dominate them. Besides this, Britain disclaims all wish to hold either Canada or Australia against its will; for its protectorate over Canada and Australia it has the indisputable requirement, the consent of the governed. It is there by the wish of all sections of the inhabitants.

The war party made much of President Krüger's so-called ultimatum, but the wonder is not that this was issued, but that it was so long delayed. War was practically declared when Britain began the movement of large bodies of troops toward the borders of the Orange Free State, and to points which hemmed the Transvaal in. An English military critic said before the ultimatum came that for the Transvaal to allow these masses of soldiers to press closer daily would be military insanity. The British continued to mass troops, confident that the Transvaal authorities would never take up the challenge. When they did so the British forces were still unprepared.

The right of Britain to attack the Dutch simply because they were rapidly increasing in South Africa and promised soon under free institutions to regain their lost control, need not be considered. If the real issue be Briton *versus* Dutch, as it is admitted now to be by Britain, she stands condemned before the civilized world. Her conduct is indefensible and her policy foolish. No nation has a right to attack and endeavor to suppress a people so capable of self-government as the Dutch and force its own supremacy, although in a minority. So much for the moral

question. And as for the policy, the attempt must ultimately fail; for, sooner or later, the more numerous race will prevail. Hence the folly of departing from Mr. Gladstone's course.

It does not seem to the writer that to plunge South Africa into a racial war, in an endeavor to suppress the Dutch, is the best and surest way to insure the peaceful and satisfactory paramountcy of Britain. On the contrary, he believes that Mr. Gladstone was well advised years ago to adopt the policy of peaceful co-operation; that Lord Salisbury was equally well advised recently by able servants of the Crown in South Africa to continue Mr. Gladstone's wise course and avoid raising the dangerous racial issue.

It is probable that Britain will have good reason, before the contest ends, and even after it ends in a supposed victory, to ponder Shakespeare's words:

" When force and gentleness play for a kingdom,
The gentle gamester will the sooner win."

ANDREW CARNEGIE.